



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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COLLATERAL CONTACTS 4-4-2005

Critical information is often available from persons outside the client family household. CP&P refers to these individuals as "Collateral Contacts," or simply "Collaterals."

SCR staffs do not make collateral calls -- Due to the nature and pacing of statewide centralized screening, State Central Registry (SCR) Screeners and Supervisors do not make collateral calls to verify information provided by reporters. See [CP&P-II-A-1-100](#).

Collateral calling reserved for assigned field office -- Contacting collaterals - local law enforcement, a child's school or child care center, a doctor or other health care provider, a counselor, therapist, verifying child care arrangements as indicated by the parent, etc. - is part of the CPS investigation. See [CP&P-II-C-2-200](#). Such activity is conducted by the child protective investigator; the Supervisor offers assistance, guidance in identifying possible sources of information, and helps determine when collaterals should be contacted.

During an investigation, collateral contacts must be in person or by telephone. It is not acceptable to mail a collateral contact form to a school, doctor, or other source. Once the child protective investigator speaks to the collateral, it is appropriate to send a collateral form for signature, if such documentation is needed for the file.

In many emergency situations, the Supervisor helps the investigation go forward by continuing to collect collateral information while the child protective investigator commences the field investigation.

RESPONSIBILITY	ACTION REQUIRED
Supervisor and Child Protective Investigator	Determine, together, which collateral contacts to make. Decide whether to make your collateral contacts before

	initiating field contact.
Supervisor	You may initiate collateral contacts yourself, or direct another professional in your field unit to help with making collateral calls, while the child protective investigator proceeds with the field investigation.

WHO TO CONTACT

4-4-2005

Relationship to/knowledge of the family/incident -- Persons or agencies to consider as collateral contacts are those who, by virtue of their relationships with, or knowledge of, a child/family/incident, can reasonably be expected to have information which will verify, clarify, or refute the presenting problem or facts.

Staff make calls with discretion, taking care to avoid breaching the confidentiality or privacy of the family.

List of common collaterals -- Collateral calls may include, but are not limited to, contacting:

- Child care providers and child care centers -- Collateral contact activities include verifying all child care arrangements. (Note: this collateral is required, whenever a parent indicates a child care arrangement is in place);
- Local law enforcement -- collateral checks with the local police regarding parent(s), the alleged perpetrator, other adults, or older juveniles living in the home. A police check is always done when there is alleged substance abuse, family violence, or if there is any other reason to believe that the police may have been involved with the family. For policy regarding the procedure to request adult probation records from the Probation Services Division, see [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#), Procedure to Request Adult Probation Records. A Promis/Gavel check is conducted by the State Central Registry when screening the report (see [CP&P-II-A-1-100](#)), if the parent's paramour is the alleged perpetrator of physical child abuse;
- Relatives, extended family members, non-custodial parent;
- Neighbors;
- Schools;

- The local County Welfare Agency for any background information the CWA may be able to provide;
- Pediatricians, family doctors, clinics, medical care specialists, other health care providers; and
- Counselors, therapists, mental health practitioners.

**CP&P LEGAL AUTHORITY RELATIVE TO COLLATERAL CONTACTS
12-30-2004**

See [CP&P-IX-G-1-200](#), Collection and Retention of Client Information, and [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#), Disclosure of Client Information, for comprehensive policy regarding the collection and disclosure of client information.

State statute permits CP&P field staff to contact neighbors, extended family members, or others who are likely to be familiar with a client family when such contact is necessary to elicit information relevant to a CPS investigation and to ensure the safety of the child.

Responsibility	Action Required
Child Protective Investigator	<p>Your objective -- to elicit needed information which is not readily available from another source, while making efforts to avoid disclosing more client information than is absolutely essential for completing your CPS investigation.</p> <p>CP&P may request from any public or private institutions, agencies, or practitioners past or present information pertaining to the child who is the subject of a child abuse or neglect investigation (N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.40).</p>
	<p>Use release form -- Although collateral contacts must be made in person or by telephone in accordance with policy, you may use a Request for Information Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.40, CP&P Form 21-7, to request additional or written information from the agencies and professionals you contacted. Fax</p>

	<p>a copy of the completed form, to save time and facilitate case documentation. Sources are not required to release the requested information, however, but those who agree to do so are given immunity from civil or criminal liability. Sources that refuse to release information are advised of the law, and given a copy of the relevant section of the statute.</p>
	<p>Consult the DAG about initiating court action, or obtaining a subpoena, if the source continues to refuse to release the requested information in writing, and there is reason to believe that the information is necessary in order to complete your child protection investigation, ensure a child's safety, or secure appropriate treatment for a child.</p>
	<p>Request records from another agency when it is both necessary and appropriate.</p>
	<p>As a government agency, CP&P does not pay for photocopies of reports requested. Send any bills or correspondence received regarding payment for photocopies to the Management Coordinator, DCF Office of Accounting, Cost Code #973. Contact the Administrative Analyst, CP&P Office of Policy, Planning, and Accountability, Cost Code #920, if there is a problem receiving a requested record due to lack of payment.</p>
	<p>CPS material requested by CP&P may be supplied with or without parental consent. However, good casework practice dictates involving the parent and obtaining</p>

	written consent, if time and circumstances permit. Request confidential information known to the parent directly from the parent, whenever possible.
	Except in cases where CP&P has custody, records kept pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-60, which relate to a Juvenile-Family Crisis or juvenile delinquency, may be obtained only through a court order when information contained therein is, or is expected to be, necessary to the determination of the existence of abuse or neglect.

PURPOSE OF COLLATERAL CONTACTS 4-4-2005

Make collateral contacts when information is needed to:

- Determine whether the child has been abused/neglected by providing new information or by corroborating or verifying information already collected
- Determine whether each child in the household is safe
- Assess the family's strengths, needs, and problems
- Determine the types of intervention needed
- Arrange for services

Gather information before, after and/or during the initial field response, as circumstances require.

Collaterals may provide the child protective investigator and Supervisor with a better understanding of:

- Family relationships and functioning
- Family resources
- Patterns of behavior
- Credibility of the principals of the investigations

- Time schedules of family members
- Medical and social history of family members
- Child care arrangements

CONTACTING NEIGHBORS 4-4-2005

Seek details from neighbors -- The assigned Child Protective Investigator or IAIU Investigator may contact a neighbor to elicit detailed information about his or her observations about a family (or a resource family home), including, but not limited to:

- interactions between the parent or caregiver and the child, between parents, between children/siblings, and/or between the parent and his or her paramour or other adult(s);
- patterns in the household;
- method of child discipline and parenting used by the parent or other adults residing in, or frequenting, the home; and/or
- unusual practices, behaviors or appearances observed.

Responsibility	Action Required
Child Protective Investigator or IAIU Investigator	Ask the neighbor to identify another neighbor or other person who can corroborate his or her observations, or who may have witnessed this, or previous, incidents.

MEDICAL EVIDENCE 12-30-2004

Responsibility	Action Required
Child Protective Investigator	When to obtain -- Obtain medical evidence on all reports involving alleged physical abuse of young children (non-verbal through pre-school

	age). This evidence should be deemed credible unless a second opinion is obtained from another physician who is more experienced in diagnosing child abuse/neglect.
	When a physician notes that an injury is non-accidental and/or is not consistent with the parent's explanation, that MUST be accepted as fact (i.e., "deemed credible") unless another medical opinion is obtained. A parent's explanation of an injury cannot be accepted as "fact" when a medical statement clearly contradicts it.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE 12-30-2004

All gathering of physical evidence is to be conducted exclusively by law enforcement. Evidence gathering is part of the criminal case preparation and processing.

Responsibility	Action Required
Child Protective Investigator	Do not to touch, handle or process potential physical evidence in any way.
	<p>If, during the course of your investigation, you come upon an item which could be evidential (e.g., an implement used to injure a child, a bloodied garment), immediately contact the police.</p> <p>(Hospital emergency room staffs are familiar with the specialized handling of potential evidence in criminal matters. Hospitals may compile a "rape kit" at the request of law enforcement in sexual abuse matters.)</p>

PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE 12-30-2004

See [CP&P-II-C-5-1000](#)

UNDRESSING A CHILD, TO EXAMINE FOR INJURIES, MALADIES

12-30-2004

See [CP&P-II-C-5-1000](#), Inspecting the Child for Signs of Physical Abuse, and Undressing a Child.

BURDEN OF PROOF 4-1-2013

See [CP&P-II-C-6-100](#), CPS Investigation Finding Determinations - Four (4) Tier Findings, for a complete discussion of CPS finding determinations.

CPS FINDING DETERMINATIONS 4-1-2013

See [CP&P-II-C-6-100](#), CPS Investigation Finding Determinations - Four (4) Tier Findings, for a complete discussion of CPS finding determinations.